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FAITH

Background

What is faith? Faith can be described as complete and unreserved trust (a) in God, as the one who fulfils his promises contained in his word; and (b) in Jesus the Messiah (Christ) as Saviour and Lord. Faith helps us to see that reality of the unseen. It is the continuing attitude of the genuine Christian.

In true Christian faith we trust God. He has shown himself to be completely trustworthy. We trust the Son of God, Jesus Christ, because he led the life of perfection, showing us how we are meant to live in obedience – the Lord Jesus paid the debt we owe through our rebellion against God (sin) and he did it by living a sinless life and dying on the cross in our place. We trust God's Son because he went willingly and knowingly to the Cross – the perfect sacrifice for all mankind, and the perfect sacrifice for each of us as individuals. We trust because God keeps his promises. We trust because God has loved each and every human being, despite the sins that so often spoil. How has he loved us? By giving Jesus his Son to stand in our place. His love is not because we are good or 'lovable'. Because of his mercy he has provided that undeserved gift. His will is that each one of us should not continue to be a slave to sin, but that (through Jesus) we should be saved from the penalty, the power and the consequences of sin. Christian believers are encouraged by answered prayer and by the power and godliness we see displayed in the lives of others who have put their faith in Jesus.

We therefore have good reason for our faith. God desires that our faith should increase — and this does seem to be the pattern, over time, for those who walk closely with him, in his ways.

In the Old Testament

Salvation through faith appears a number of times. There is also real faith in God's repeated promises and 'agreements' (more correctly called 'covenants'). The following are some Old Testament verses on faith and New Testament commentary on them:

Genesis 6:22; 12:1–5; 13:14–18	cf. Hebrews 11:7–10
Genesis 15:6	cf. Romans 4:2–5; Hebrews 11:11–12.
Genesis 22:1–19	cf. Hebrews 11:17–19.
Genesis 50:24, 25	cf. Hebrews 11:22
Exodus 9:20, 21; Exodus 12:21–25	cf. Hebrews 11:28
Joshua 6:20	cf. Hebrews 11:30
Ruth 2:12; Psalms 56:3	

In the New Testament

Jesus Christ claimed to fulfil Old Testament promises. Accordingly, faith was to be placed in him from that time forwards.

Matthew 16:8; Mark 6:5–6; 9:23; 10:52; Luke 7:50; 8:50; 17:5–6, 22:32

John 1:12; 3:15–16, 36; 6:35–36; 7:38; 8:24; 11:25–26; 12:46

The Apostles went out into the world with this one message: “. . . *believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved*” (Acts 16:31).

Acts 3:16; 4:12; 8:5, 35; 10:43; Romans 3:21–22; 5:1–2; 10:4, 9; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:5

Galatians 2:15–16, 20; 3:22; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:8, 21; 2:7

We are saved by grace through faith

But the fruit of this faith will be demonstrated in the works of our lives. Faith in itself has no merit – it is, figuratively speaking, the hand that takes the salvation that God gives.

Romans **4:1–5**; **10:9–10**; James **2:14, 16, 24**; Titus **3:4–8**; Galatians **2:21**; Ephesians **2:8–10 (RV)**; **6:16**
1 Timothy **6:12**; 1 John **5:4**

Biblical Summary

The ‘cloud of witnesses’ who lived and died by faith.

Hebrews **12:1–2** (cf. chapter 11)